

In the News

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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Message from the Mayor

I'm sure many of you know that the issue of school choice has been a hot topic in the past few months. I've been working diligently within my administration, the school board and with the federal government and Councilmember Kevin Chavous (Ward 7) to help develop a choice program. I am confident that such a program will benefit the children of the District.

This issue has drawn national attention — from a newspaper article in China to an editorial in California's Sacramento Bee newspaper. And on June 30, I joined President Bush and Secretary of Education Rod Paige at the District's KIPP DC: Key Academy for a discussion about school choice. KIPP Academy is a charter school where students work overtime to educate themselves — and it was an honor to have the President and Secretary Paige at a school I'm very proud of.

The school choice issue is one that's often accompanied by heated rhetoric where the message is often lost in the shuffle of words. I am committed to making the improvements we need for the District of Columbia Public Schools. But thousands of children can't wait until we do everything we need to do to make changes. These children need help right now. Many parents have already found alternatives in our thriving charter school system. I'm proud to say that in the District, we have a robust charter school system. We have the most charter schools per capita in the United States and the demand still has not been met. We want to meet the demand for better choice.

Of course, there are myriad opinions in the city about the topic of school choice. I might talk to 10 people in one place who tell me the good things about school choice. Then again, I might talk to another 10 people who tell me the bad things. I think we should try for the first time with an objective, neutral, third-party review to evaluate the outcomes of children in the private parochial schools, charter schools and public schools.

To improve K through 12 education, I believe it is essential for parents to have options. As I told the audience at KIPP Academy, parents should have more than a Hobson's choice when it comes to educating their children — they should have real choice.

They should be able to consider a magnet program in a neighborhood school, or an innovative charter school, or an improving public school or the chance to apply for a scholarship to help pay the tuition at a private school. That's the kind of choice that will inspire competition and foster innovation.

Emotions run high on the issue of federal funding for private school scholarships in Washington, DC. Leaders from both major political parties have weighed in. Advocates and scholars from around the country have opined about what's best or worst for our children. In the end, I am not accountable to anyone with an ideological agenda. I am accountable to the students and parents in my city who all yearn for and deserve the same thing — our confidence in their ability to make the right educational choices if given the opportunity.



AGENCY WEBSITES

[Office of Tax and Revenue](#)

[Department of Parks and Recreation](#)

[Department of Employment Services](#)

[Metropolitan Police Department](#)

[Office of Boards and Commissions](#)

[Commission on the Arts and Humanities](#)

National Night Out Kick-off

On Tuesday, August 5, District of Columbia residents, business owners, civic leaders and young people will join the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) and me in celebrating the 20th annual National Night Out against crime. The District's observance of National Night Out will officially kick off at 5 pm at the Fort Stanton Recreation Center, at 18th and Erie Streets, SE.

For 20 years, National Night Out has served as a time for police and citizens to get to know each other and spread the word about how fighting crime is a team effort. The National Association of Town Watch, the sponsor of National Night Out, is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the development and promotion of organized, law enforcement-affiliated crime and drug prevention programs.

National Night Out is held the first Tuesday in August and promotes involvement in crime-and-drug-prevention activities, strengthening police-community relations and encouraging neighborhood camaraderie to create safer streets. Since 1984, "National Night Out — America's Night Out Against Crime" — has grown to involve more than 30 million people from more than 9,000 communities.

National Night Out is designed to:

- Heighten crime and drug prevention awareness
- Generate support for, and participation in, local anti crime efforts
- Strengthen neighborhood spirit and police-community partnerships
- Send a message to criminals letting them know neighborhoods are organized and fighting back

Residents are asked to lock their doors and spend the evening outside with neighbors and police. Many neighborhoods will be hosting a variety of special events such as block parties and anti-crime rallies. Additionally, communities across the District are scheduling block parties, neighborhood cookouts, citizen patrols, candlelight vigils, and crime prevention seminars and demonstrations during the afternoon and evening hours.

A complete list of National Night Out activities in the District is posted on the Metropolitan Police Department's Web site, www.mpd.dc.gov. Residents may also call the MPD's Community Outreach Section at (202) 727-0783 for more information. I look forward to seeing all of you joining me in recognizing National Night Out this year.

Community Profile

Gina Rollo

Gina Rollo serves her community in a non-traditional way. By volunteering her time at the office of Greater DC Cares she supports its role of providing volunteer opportunities for thousands of District residents. "I'm not out in the field, but I'm helping an organization that helps volunteers," Gina said. "It feels good to be a resource."



Gina Rollo

This Ward 2 resident works nearly full-time assisting the staff members at Greater DC Cares with their many programs and events. She managed the MLK "Knowledge is Power" Book Drive for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday of Service, an event that connected almost 1,000 volunteers to service opportunities during the holiday weekend. Rollo formed partnerships with local bookstores and online book distributors to help publicize the MLK "Knowledge is Power" Book Drive. The book drive collected more than 1,000 children's books on African-American history that were distributed to 27 DC Public Libraries.

"If I have time on my hands, I want to give back to the community," Rollo said. She also volunteers for the Philadelphia Association for Blind Athletes' annual track meet and operates her own public relations company for technology companies, RolloCom Communications.

Greater DC Cares is the largest provider of volunteer and business philanthropy services in the greater Washington region, matching almost 60,000 volunteers each year to local nonprofit organizations. To learn more, visit www.dc-cares.org or call 1-800-VOLUNTEER.

Gina is the July adult winner of the Mayor's Community Service Award, sponsored by the DC Commission on National and Community Service. If you would like to nominate a youth or adult for the monthly award, visit www.cnscs.dc.gov for nomination information or call (202) 727-9461.



LINK TO OTHER WEBSITES

[DC Agenda](#)

[Hands on DC](#)

[DC Convention and Tourism](#)

[DC Public Library](#)

Screen on the Green and Live on Penn

I hope everyone is enjoying a great summer of movies and music. The District of Columbia has some very exciting and entertaining events happening. The "Live on Penn" summer concert series is currently underway, and "Screen on the Green" is celebrating its fifth year. Both of these events help bolster the fact that our city is a great place to live, work and play.

Live on Penn (www.liveonpenn.com) is an open-air summer concert series. It's showcasing national and local recording artists in an all day festival with partial proceeds to benefit the District-based Hoop Dreams Scholarship Fund. The concert series will run on Saturdays through September 6.

At the opening of the Live on Penn concert series, musical instruments were donated to children from the District's Stuart-Hobson Middle School. The students received a drum set, a guitar, two clarinets, two flutes, two trumpets and two trombones. We're thrilled that our young people will be able to fully experience music thanks to this generous gift.

Also this summer, HBO and America Online have brought back Screen on the Green, the free classic outdoor film festival on the National Mall. This five-week series is celebrating its fifth year and has fast become a favorite summertime tradition in Washington, DC. The films are shown on the Mall between 4th and 7th Streets. The film lineup for the rest of the summer is:

August 4:	Jailhouse Rock (1957)
August 11:	2001: A Space Odyssey (1968)

As always, I am proud to showcase what this city can do, and what we have to offer.

Benning Terrace: Working with Citizens, Finding Solutions

In the past few weeks, the District of Columbia government has made some exceptional efforts to help curb youth violence in the Benning Terrace area. We've implemented some novel changes in the neighborhood in an effort to work with children and youth. Our response is based in part on the tragic death of Shirley Pugh, 60, whose car was hit by a stolen Ford Taurus that ran a red light at Texas Avenue and C Street, Southeast.

In response to community concerns, the Department of Parks and Recreation is providing structured activities for children and youth living in Benning Terrace including:

- Four "Roving Leaders" in Benning Terrace to work with children and youth in the community
- The Fun Wagon — a mobile recreation vehicle
- The Skatemobile, also a mobile recreation vehicle
- Repairs to two basketball courts have been completed, and both are now operable after the installation of backboards, rims and nets, and a fresh coat of paint

The Metropolitan Police Department has blocked off the 4700 block of Alabama Avenue, SE between F and G streets to provide space for recreational activity. And the District of Columbia Public Schools has re-opened Fletcher-Johnson Middle School for the rest of the summer.

Furthermore, the DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation will provide funds for community-based organizations to operate out of Fletcher-Johnson — including the African American Heritage Dancers; RISE; and the Northeast Performing Arts group.

The Metropolitan Police Department has established an overtime detail in the 6th District that will concentrate on auto theft and be supported by the enforcement and investigative efforts of MPD's auto theft unit and the Washington Area Vehicle Enforcement Unit. Also, the MPD's community policing office is reaching out to young people and asking them to be part of a longer-term problem solving effort — that meeting, called "Speak Out" will take place later this month.

The District Department of Transportation will perform a review of Benning Terrace to learn whether speed bumps would be appropriate and if traffic patterns in the area can be altered to reduce speeding and dangers to pedestrians.

I'm saddened by what's happened at Benning Terrace, and we're doing everything we can to make sure conditions improve in that area, especially for young people. My vision as mayor has been to increase the quality, quantity and accessibility of services for children, youth, and families in the District. I fully intend to make this vision a reality for all neighborhoods and citizens of the District.



Smart Commute Initiative: Encouraging City Living

On July 23, I joined a host of local leaders to help kick off an important new initiative designed to help our local environment and to help residents find places to live near public transportation. The “Washington Regional Smart Commute Initiative” is an important new effort by WMATA (Metro), SunTrust Mortgage, Inc., BF Saul Mortgage, Fannie Mae — and many other important partners in the private and public sectors.

The initiative is a new effort to encourage transit use by recognizing, in the home-buying process, the cost savings of using public transportation. Homebuyers who enroll in this novel loan program can receive credits on mortgages and discounts on Metro fares. This market-driven initiative is designed to encourage home buying near public transit. It will be a great example of the kinds of tools we must use in our region to address the serious challenges of growth, transportation needs, and housing affordability.

The Washington Regional Smart Commute Initiative covers the District of Columbia, Alexandria, Arlington, Falls Church, much of Fairfax and Prince William Counties, as well as Fairfax City, Manassas, Manassas Park, Herndon, and much of Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties.

This is a positive and tangible example of regional cooperation — at both the public and private sector levels — and addresses the link between housing affordability and transportation costs, two of the most pressing challenges facing those living in the Washington region. Few areas of the country exceed ours in terms of high housing costs, commuting burdens, and the resulting impacts on families’ quality of life.

As many of our citizens know, I’m in the midst of a campaign to bring 100,000 new residents to the District of Columbia. Our region has so much to offer, and the “Smart Commute Initiative” gives people who work in the Washington Metropolitan Area an alternative to driving and traffic congestion.

This initiative will help us maximize the use of our world-class public transportation infrastructure. At the same time, we can minimize traffic congestion and make homeownership more affordable for our citizens.

In the District, this initiative is another part of our “City Living Campaign,” which we launched last month. Residents in the region interested in learning more about moving to the District can attend our City Living Expo in October. To sign up, please visit www.citylivingdc.com.

Important Information about Arson

On July 14 and July 15, the District of Columbia and Fire Emergency Medical Services (FEMS) held two informative meetings entitled the “Arson Education and Awareness Town Hall Meetings.” The meetings were held at the Greater Mt. Calvary Family Life Center on Rhode Island Avenue in Northeast and at the Marshall Heights Community Center in Northeast.

In response to a recent spate of arsons in the District and Prince George’s County, we have formed a multi-jurisdictional task force with the DC FEMS, PG County Fire Department, Metropolitan Police Department, Prince Georges County Police and the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Currently, there are several arson cases that are actively being investigated by the task force. To date, there are five arson fires in Prince George’s County and one in the District of Columbia that have been conclusively linked.

Arson is the second leading cause of death from fires in the United States, exceeded only by losses due to smoking. However, arson is the leading cause of property damage due to fires.

Arson costs the United States more than \$3 billion in a typical year. One out of every four dollars lost to fire is the result of arson. One of every four fires that occur in the U.S. each year — some half million — are arson. Arsonists often escape punishment. Only 16 percent of arson offenses lead to arrest. On average, only 2 percent of arson cases are closed by conviction.

Below are a few things citizens can do to safeguard themselves against arson:

- Install a burglar and fire alarm system that transmits a message to the police or fire department.
- Trim or remove shrubbery and signs that obstruct the view of your residence on all sides.
- Install lights that illuminate the exterior and entrances of your residence.
- Establish a neighborhood watch program.

If you have any information pertaining to any arson, please call (301) 77-ARSON.



District Activities



On July 24, Mayor Williams and Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton held a news conference spotlighting the District Department of Transportation's announcement of lane closures for emergency repairs to the Roosevelt Bridge. The news conference served as a demonstration of the need to renew the nation's bridges and transportation infrastructure.



On July 2, Mayor Williams joined local officials in breaking ground for construction of the Bellevue Housing Counseling Resource Center in Southwest. This facility will house a Housing Counseling Resource Center, Home Buying Program, Financial and Economic Development Counseling Center, among other amenities.



Mayor Williams addressed the media on July 23 along with DC Councilmember Kevin Chavous (Ward 7) and Virginia Rep. Tom Davis. The group discussed alternative school funding during a visit to Capitol Hill.



Mayor Williams and members of the DC Council address reporters during a press conference on Monday, July 14 regarding support for a lawsuit to overturn a federal ban on the District imposing a commuter tax on those who work in the city but live elsewhere.

Community News

- [DPW Newspaper Gives Student Summer Reading with a Recycled Message](#)
- [Homicide Rewards Increased to \\$25,000](#)
- [MPDC Reaffirms Policy Prohibiting Inquiries into Immigration Status](#)

[View all News Releases](#)

Upcoming Events

- | | |
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| 8/3 | National Kids Day
The Ellipse (Across from Washington Monument)
12 noon - 6 pm
For more information, call (301) 562-2016 |
| 8/5 | National Night Out Kick-Off
5 pm
Fort Stanton Recreation Center
18th and Erie Streets, SE |
| 8/16 | Adult Literacy Festival and Recruitment Fair
10 am - 3 pm
Vermont Avenue, NW between R and 11th Streets
For more information, call (202) 234-BOOK |
| 8/24 | 40th Anniversary of the "March on Washington"
9 am
Lincoln Memorial grounds on National Mall
For more information, call (202) 544-8026 |

[View the Mayor's daily schedule](#)

